

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL LUBUMBASHI IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS STATE 123882

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPR, CG

SUBJECT: SHABA INCURSIONS: U.S. PRESS REACT

1. FOLLOWING REUTERS STORY DATELINED KINSHASA MAY 14 FRONT
PAGED N.Y. TIMES MAY 15. HEADLINE "ZAIRE REPORTS ON
ATTACK IN SOUTH BY COMMUNIST-BACKED KATANGANS." SUBHEAD:
"MOBUTU ASKS FOR AID, SAYS 4,000 REBELS ARE FROM ANGOLA."

2. TEXT FOLLOWS. QUOTE - ZAIRE SAID TODAY THAT ITS
SOUTHERN PROVINCE OF SHABA, FORMERLY KNOWN AS KATANGA, WAS
BEING ATTACKED BY COMMUNIST-BACKED KATANGAN REBELS FROM
ANGOLA WHO ENTERED THE COUNTRY THROUGH ZAMBIA.

THE OFFICIAL PRESS AGENCY AZAP QUOTED PRESIDENT MOBUTU SESE
SEKO AS HAVING SAID THAT 4,000 FORMER KATANGAN REBELS BEGAN
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THE ATTACK THURSDAY NIGHT.

ZAIRE DEFEATED A SIMILAR INVASION FORCE LAST YEAR WITH THE
HELP OF MOROCCAN TROOPS AND MILITARY AID FROM FRANCE AND
BELGIUM.

PRESIDENT MOBUTU SAID THE REBELS WERE ATTACKING THE COPPER

TOWN OF KOLWEZI AND WERE SUPPORTED BY THE SOVIET UNION AND CUBA, AS WELL AS BY ALGERIA AND LIBYA.

(CARTER ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS IN WASHINGTON EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER REPORTS THAT KOLWEZI HAD FALLEN TO REBEL FORCES WHO HAD CROSSED INTO ZAIRE AND WERE BEING AIDED BY CUBANS BASED IN ANGOLA.)

THE PRESS AGENCY SAID PRESIDENT MOBUTU WAS PREPARING TO ORDER A GENERAL MOBILIZATION AND HAD APPEALED FOR HELP TO THE AMBASSADORS OF SEVERAL NATIONS, INCLUDING THE UNITED STATES, FRANCE, BELGIUM, MOROCCO AND CHINA.

THE AGENCY SAID CUBAN TROOPS WERE AMONG ATTACKERS WHO WERE DRIVEN BACK FROM MUTSHATSHA, IN SOUTHEAST SHABA, BY ZAIRIAN TROOPS IN A TWO-AND-A-HALF-HOUR BATTLE THIS MORNING.

IN BRUSSELS, THE BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY SAID IT HAD BEEN TOLD BY ZAIRE THAT PART OF KOLWEZI HAD BEEN CAPTURED BY THE REBELS, WHO HAD LAUNCHED THEIR ATTACK FROM ANGOLA.

THE ZAIRIAN AGENCY SAID THE ATTACK AGAINST KOLWEZI HAD BEEN CARRIED OUT BY REBELS WEARING CIVILIAN CLOTHES, WHO "CAME FROM ANGOLA VIA ZAMBIA" AND HAD SLIPPED INTO THE TOWN DURING THE NIGHT.
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"THE REBELS WHO HAVE ATTACKED KOLWEZI DID NOT WANT TO INVOLVE ANGOLA," AZAP SAID. "EVEN THOUGH THEY CERTAINLY CAME FROM THAT COUNTRY, THEY TOOK CARE TO PASS THROUGH ZAMBIA SO AS NOT TO INVOLVE ANGOLA IN OPERATION."

THE AGENCY REPORTED THAT PRESIDENT MOBUTU HAD SAID THE ATTACK PLAN, CODE-NAMED "OPERATION DOVE", HAD BEEN CONCEIVED IN HAVANA DURING A MISSION ORGANIZED BY THE "MONGUYA GANG," NAMED AFTER DANIEL MONGUYA MBENGE, AN OPPONENT OF THE MOBUTU GOVERNMENT. IT WAS PERFECTED IN ALGIERS, HE SAID, WHICH TRAINS GUERRILLAS ON BEHALF OF FORMER KATANGANS.

IN MARCH LAST YEAR, ZAIRE DEFEATED AN ATTACK ON SHABA MOUNTED FROM ANGOLA BY KATANGAN INSURGENTS, SUPPORTERS OF THE LATE MOISE TSHOMBE, WHO LED THE FIRST ATTEMPT BY THE PROVINCE TO SECEDE IN THE 1960'S.

ZAIRE WAS HELPED BY 1,500 MOROCCAN TROOPS AND RECEIVED MILITARY AID FROM FRANCE AND BELGIUM, WHICH RULED THE COUNTRY UNTIL IT BECAME INDEPENDENT IN 1960.

A WESTERN SOURCE IN THE ZAMBIAN CAPITAL OF LUSAKA SAID THE
ATTACKERS WERE FORMER KATANGAN REBELS WHO BELONGED TO THE
NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT FOR THE CONGO, LED BY COL.
NATHANIEL MBUMBA. THE CONGO IS THE FORMER NAME OF ZAIRE.

ANOTHER WESTERN SOURCE IN LUSAKA SAID THERE HAD BEEN
CLASHES AROUND KOLWEZI BUT CALLED THE ZAMBIAN ESTIMATE OF
4,000 REBELS IMPROBABLE.

DIPLOMATIC SOURCES IN KINSHASA SAID IN MARCH THAT PRESIDENT
MOBUTU HAD SENT UP TO 9,000 TROOPS OF THE KAMANYOLA BRI-
GADE, TRAINED BY NORTH KOREA, TO SHABA AFTER THE 1977
FIGHTING. END QUOTE. VANCE

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